

AN APPRAISAL OF BISHNOI MOVEMENT

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Abstract

The Bishnoi are one of the first community in India, who give emphasis on environment conservation and wildlife protection in their lives. They are also known as the first environmentalists of India. They showed the real path of sustainable development through simple approach to life. In 1730 AD they sacrificed their lives to save the environment. This paper depicts the faith of Bishnoi about nature and in conservation of environment. It also highlights on Bishnoi movement and concludes that they teach us how to protect trees to save our planet.

Keywords: Environment, Conservation, Sustainable, Movement, Wildlife, Development



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Introduction: An environmental movement is a movement for nature. They are considered as one of the world's oldest surviving ecologist communities. Their lives centred on nature. They mainly live in western parts of Rajasthan in the fringe of the Thar desert and some parts of Haryana, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh.

Guru Jambheshwar was the founder of the Bishnoi Community. He formulated 29 principles that he had given to the Bishnoi to follow during their lifetime. Many researchers thought that because of 29 tenets, they are called Bishnoi as bis indicates 20 and noi means 9. These tenets were written in a document known as (shabadwan) out of 29 principles 6 principles are dedicated to the conservation of nature and all wild animals killing of animals and felling of trees mainly the khejri. Growing extensively in the fringe of Thar desert is strictly banned to the Bishnois. Even they use non wood material for cremations. Giving shelter to deserted animals is their normal routine, They love the animals like their child. They not only protect the environment but also plant trees even in the arid regions. The Bishnoi community is famous for animal husbandry and also well known for nature lover and animal lover. They are also known as "Vishnoi" as they worship Lord Vishnu.

Objectives of Movement: The main objective of this movement were

- To save the trees against the cutting of trees by royal soldiers.
- To conserve bio-diversity of the area.
- To promote animal husbandry.
- Finally, to preserve the whole ecosystem balance.

Bishnoi Movement: About 300 years ago in 1730 maharaja Abhay Singh, king of Jodhpur wanted to make a new palace. He sent army to collect wood from the forest near the village of Khejali. The Bishnoi community were living near the place. When the soldier of king began to harm the trees, the Bishnois started to protest to save the trees. But the soldiers ignored them and started to cut the trees as they had royal orders.

Amrita Devi Bishnoi, a village woman could not tolerate the destruction of her faith and the sacred trees. She stepped forward and decided to hug the trees to save them. Soon after her, her daughter, family also joined with her and embraced the trees in an attempt to stop soldiers from cutting trees. Her slogan was “A chopped head is cheaper than a felled tree”. To see her attempt other local people also adopted the same strategy. Bishnois from khejri and nearby villages came to the stop and hugged the trees one by one to save them from being cut down, But the soldiers did not stop. Finally the soldiers started beheading the Bishnois. The soldiers beheaded 363 Bishnoi villagers were killed in the name of the sacred khejri forest.

When the Maharaja Abay Singh heard this activity of soldiers, he immediately come to the village. He ordered to stop logging operation and apologized for the act before the villagers. Then the maharaja designated the Bishnoi area as a protected area, forbidding harm to trees and animals. This legislation still exists today in that region. Memory of them

All martyred Bishnoi were buried in the same village. In memory of them, khejri tree were planted around the aera which is still rich in greenery and animal life. The Bishnois assemble there to show their honour for the sacrifice of their people in September on Shukla Dashami of Bhadrapad. Govt. of India also give Amrita Devi Bishnoi wildlife protection Award in her memory.

Conclusion: Bishnois are born nature lover and original environmental warriors. They fearlessly fought for trees at the cost of their lives. Conservation of nature must be our primary concern in life because we can not live without environment. There is much we can learn from this small and modest community. They showed us the real way to save our earth.

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